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Shoreline

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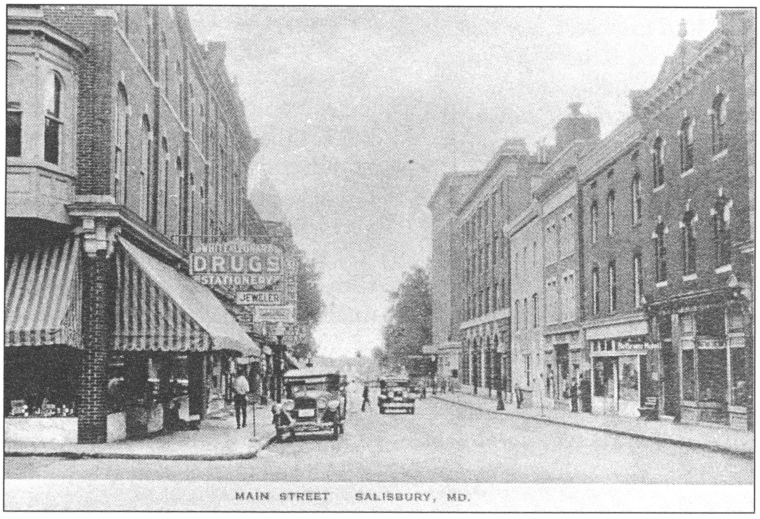
For the Members of the Edward H. Nabb Research Center for Delmarva History and Culture at Salisbury University

"Main Street Salisbury" Arrives at Nabb Center

By Julie Messick

Take a walk down Main Street in Salisbury. Glimpse the way of life during the turn of the century in Salisbury as you see the many stores and types of items they carried. This exhibit is held over from last year, and in it you will see artifacts and images from the stores that once dominated the retail industry in Salisbury, long before the advent of the "mall" and mega-stores like Walmart. There are some artifacts, such as the "big shoe" that once stood outside of the E. Homer White Shoe Store and the peanut roaster that sat outside of Cinno's Confectionary, which will tug at the heartstrings of those who remember shopping on Main Street. Items are on display from all of the different types of stores that once lined Main Street, from department stores, to hotels, to Ulman's Grand Opera House, to local newspapers.



MAIN STREET SALISBURY, MD.

A new section featuring political memorabilia has been added, which includes items dating from 1895 to 1944, from local campaigns to presidential. Another new addition features the yellow bricks taken from the East Church Street "yellow brick road" that was paved in 1904 (another article in this issue has more details on this wonderful piece of history). You'll see men's and women's clothing and other department store wares as well as a wide array of hardware items. Included among them is a double-barreled shotgun owned by Albert Laws, who served during the Spanish American War. Schools, churches and municipal buildings that were located in the downtown area are also represented.

The exhibit features a combination of artifacts, images and digital media that give the viewer a sense of having stepped back in time. Don't miss the "Then and Now" poster showing images of the stores that were once along Main Street comparing them to images of what is there now. Don't forget to add "Main Street Salisbury" to your "must-see" list this fall!

Salisbury A Rather Quaint Town Back in 1905, Says Former Resident

The following article was published in 1954 in *The Salisbury Advertiser and the Wicomico Countian* newspaper.

EDITORS NOTE: Paul Brown, 67, who first saw Salisbury back in 1905 when he arrived to set up a McCrory 5-and-10-cent store on West Main Street, came back the other day for a look at one of his favorite towns and for a visit with some of his numerous local friends. Mr. Brown, now retired and living in Florida, dropped in at The Advertiser *office to reminisce on conditions as he found them nearly half a century ago and to comment on the changes which have transpired since that far away time. His story of the old Salisbury days, as related to Samuel L. Sherwell, is as follows:*

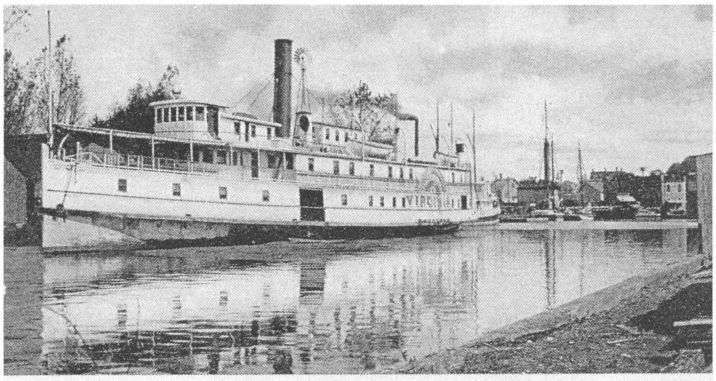
On a bright spring day in 1905 when I was serving as manager of the three McCory 5-and-10-cent stores in Wheeling, WV, I was busily engaged in removing merchandise from one of the front windows preparatory to re-dressing the displays. Suddenly I was handed a telegram which directed me to take the next train for a place called Salisbury in the state of Maryland and prepare to open a new McCrory store there.

Salisbury? I'd never heard of such a place. Where was it? With some difficulty I finally located it on a railroad map. It seemed to be a pin-point of a place on the Eastern Shore. It was reputed to have a population of some 4,500 persons. I hurried down to the railroad depot and asked the man how to get to that place. After a bit of figuring the agent told me the best thing to do would be to buy a ticket to Baltimore and make the rest of the trip on a steamer which connected the metropolis with the town to which I had been directed. As a youth of 20 who had always lived in the cities, this order seemed as startling to me as if I had been detailed to go on a big-game hunting expedition into the remote regions of darkest Africa.

Thrilling River Voyage

Once I arrived in Baltimore, I finally succeeded in locating

(continued)



11092—Steamer Virginia at Docks, Salisbury, Md.

the steamer Virginia which was about to set sail for Salisbury. That trip I shall never forget. Since that day I have traveled about the country by train, plane, bus and motorcar, but the boatride down the Bay and up the Wicomico River still remains in my mind as one of my Number One experiences.

It was a sunny Sunday as I took my place on the forward deck and watched the Virginia go on her way, often apparently headed for some green field or expanse of marsh – then suddenly a bend in the river would loom up and by some deft steering, the craft would avoid hitting anything which resembled terra firma.

Never have I seen a river so crooked or a boat so expertly handled. Frequently she would pull up to some small dock – deep in the woods or meadows – to unload freight. Immediately the negro stevedores would go to work on the freight with hand trucks, making their way with a sort of rhythmic, stiff-legged gait which was pleasant to watch. I can still hear the captain as he leaned over the rail and called out: "All ashore that's goin' ashore!"

Jocular Traveling Man

On board I met a carpet salesman traveling out of Philadelphia. Upon hearing that I was a city-bred youth, he seemed to take delight in telling me of the "God forsaken" town I was bound for. He certainly didn't do any thing to allay the acute case of home-sickness which had laid hold of me as soon as I had set out on this journey.

At last the Virginia warped in at a lonely-looking dock and we were informed that this was Salisbury. But where was the town? As I leaned over the ship's rail for a better view, all I could see was the wharf shed, scrub pine trees and a great expanse of sand. Certainly, there must be some mistake. The smart Mr. McCrory surely wasn't intending to locate one of his stores in this awful wasteland!

With the aid of my carpet-salesman friend, I got a seat on a yellow bus pulled by a large horse, the driver being one of the fattest men I had ever seen. The driver's seat had been built wide enough to accommodate two people, but I noted the driver's huge anatomy spread completely over the space originally intended for two. Later I got to know this driver, a fine fellow named Mr. Wallace, and we remained good friends for years.

Pioneer First Families

But, I discovered ere long, it wasn't the buildings which made an up-and-coming town – it was the men and women who populated the place. Even in the fargone year of 1905 Salisbury was blessed with the presence of young businessmen of high character, fixed determination and progressive merchandising ideals. I don't believe that by searching anywhere in the land one could have found a finer group of oldstock, true-blooded Americans than one encountered in the ranks of Brewingtons, Jacksons, Tomlinsons, Ruarks, Gordys, Gunbys, Mitchells, Tilghmans, Whites, Grahmans, Watsons, Smiths, Dicks, Adkins, Woodcocks, Goslees, Ulmans and dozens more of the same general calibre. Friendly, wholesome, God-fearing, folks of lofty ideals – these were the people who made Salisbury.

Some of the Brewingtons, who published the *Wicomico News*, used to refer to people who were not natives as "foreigners." Possibly this may have indicated something of a clannish spirit, but the fact remains that in the subsequent years these so-called "foreigners" did make their contribution to the growth and well being of the city – working in close co-operation with the fine families of the early 1900's to lay the foundation of modern Salisbury. These "foreigners" were simply absorbed, with happy results for all concerned.

Swanky Old Hostelry

The carpet salesman and I were deposited at the entrance of the town's principal hotel, a hostelry called "Peninsula" and located on the site presently occupied by the Salisbury National Bank. Operated by Harry Phillips, the hotel could be considered as rather swanky for its day and age. A novelty to me was the Japanese straw matting which was then a popular floor covering, and which was to be found in each of the hotel rooms.

As I was an out-lander from the North, I was unfamiliar with that little red pest known as the "jigger." One evening I made the mistake of sitting down on the matting-covered floor of my room, and during the night I developed a terrific case of itching – which necessitated a great deal of scratching. I was rather alarmed to find my legs breaking out in large red welts. Next morning I was informed that all I had was a visitation of "jiggers," and told that the simplest way to combat the insects was to dig them out of the welts with the blade of a sharp pen-knife.

On the evening of my arrival, I registered and was assigned to my room and then went for a stroll down what seemed to be the one and only business street. One thing I recall having seen in my wanderings was a store which had its front display windows dressed up with suits of heavy underwear – which had been left on display for so long that the sun was already turning it a rich yellow!

At this point the above article ended with a TO BE CONTINUED notation. We have not yet been able to find the exact date of publication or the rest of the article, which was probably published in a later edition of the paper.

21253—Main Street, from Front Bridge, SALISBURY, Md.

"Shantyboats and Gunning Clubs" Exhibit

By Charles Overholt

One day after Christmas on a cold, misty morning in 1998, a weather-worn green and white door was shut and locked for the final time. The Bob-O-Dell hunting club, which had been in operation since 1917, was officially closed and handed over to the United States government. In an ironic twist of fate, this doorway, which had once ushered hundreds of excited guests into excursions of hunting and fun on the marshes, was now a symbol of the club's very inaccessibility. It divided memories from reality – the past from the future.

The closing of Bob-O-Dell, and the many clubs like it, is one of the most controversial local stories in living memory. Founded by a variety of men for a variety of reasons, these hunting clubs came in a myriad of sizes, shapes and specialties. From the Green Run club with its massive dining hall known for hosting "fly-in" breakfast, to the Pope's Island club with its emphasis on business, the clubs were as different and colorful as their owners and patrons.

Despite their differences, they shared several important traits. They shared the fact that they were all located in the mid-Atlantic flyway – the best waterfowl hunting area in the world. They also all made use of Eastern Shore natives for guides, who are hands down the best waterfowl hunters in the world.

The good times and splendid memories had on Assateague were universal among the hunting clubs, yet they were all doomed to suffer a fate unbefitting of such merry careers. They were caught between an old world and a new one, between law and tradition, conservation and recreation. Subject to forces beyond their control, the clubs and the generations of tradition and culture they epitomized, slowly washed away. Today, all that remains of this bygone era are a few derelict buildings and the words, memories and photos of those who loved them.

Revisit these memories at the Nabb Center's exhibit "When Freedom Seemed as Endless as the Marsh."

Historical Comments: The Yellow Brick Road

By George Chevallier

There is still a small patch of yellow brick that has been exposed through wear in the 400 block of East Church Street. This is a remnant of the first, hard-surfaced road in Salisbury. As you turn east off Route 13 onto Church Street, if you miss seeing it, your car will remind you where it is by giving you a jolt as you descend into the pothole. I took this picture on February 24, 2011, and it is probably the last we will see of "the yellow brick road" (see updates that follow).

The vitrified yellow bricks were put down on a concrete base in the spring of 1904. The road covered was from the West Main Street Bridge up Main Street to Division Street where it turned left. From there it took a right turn on Church Street to the NYP&N Railway track. Since there were few, if any, automobiles around at the time, the clang of the iron wheels on wagons and the clop-clop of horses' iron horseshoes on the brick caused quite a racket. After this, all Salisbury streets were covered with macadam.

The original cost of the yellow brick road was $27,000, or $8 per running foot. The City of Salisbury paid half of this, and the abutting property owners on each side were charged one quarter of the cost.

This little bit of Salisbury history is going to be visible until the city decides to fill in that pothole. When they do decide to fill it in, I would love to cut out one of those bricks and save it for posterity. There is not much history to see around Salisbury, so if you want to see it, you had better get out there before it is covered up.

It sometimes seems as though there was a concerted effort by the local "powers that be" to erase Salisbury's past. The fiasco of covering the facades of most of the buildings on Main Street with aluminum to make Salisbury look more modern has been reversed in recent years with some of the property owners realizing that brick makes for a more attractive look than aluminum. In this throw-away mentality of today, there is something to be said for taking care of what we already have. Maybe some of the structures are not as practical as what can be built now, but preserving our history and our heritage is important, too. Improvements can be made and the past can be preserved at the same time. Paving over the yellow brick with macadam certainly improved the situation for the person traveling on it and the people living near it.

Also, the NYP&N station, which was the final destination of the yellow brick road, was replaced in 1914 when the new Union Station was built.

UPDATE: The city temporarily filled the pothole with tar and chip. As seen here, there are a few yellow bricks still visible. Howard Landon at Public Works said he wanted to fill it months ago, but they said it was historic and should be preserved, so they did a temporary repair. When it is repaired again, I have been promised any bricks they extract. Whoopee! That will be some great Salisbury history.

UPDATE No. 2, May 29, 2012: The city has repaired the spot and has given me nine of the bricks. Two have been given to the Nabb Research Center and are on display in the "Main Street Salisbury" exhibit.

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Exhibits and Events - Fall 2012

Nabb Center Gallery exhibit hours are Monday, Wednesday and Friday 1-4 p.m. or by appointment (410-543-6312).

Main Street Salisbury Exhibit
August 27-December 14, Nabb Center Gallery
Explore the turn-of-the-20th century business district of Salisbury, MD.

When Freedom Seemed as Endless as the Marsh: Shantyboats and Gunning Clubs Exhibit
August 27-December 14, Nabb Center Gallery
Historic images depict the evolution of the shanty boat to a land-based club, the eventual lessening of waterfowl numbers and the demise of shanty boats and gunning clubs. Although most of the old clubs are now gone, the memories remain.

Shantyboats and Gunning Clubs, Discussion
Thursday, August 30, 7 p.m., Nabb Center Gallery
Local historian Pat Russell presents a brief overview of the exciting new exhibit.

Hearts Away, Bombs Away, Lecture and Book Signing
Thursday, September 13, 2:30 p.m., Nabb Center Gallery
Vincent Gisriel, the author of Hearts Away, Bombs Away, speaks about his book, a true story about his parents and their correspondence through letters while his father was fighting in World War II. In the letters, Gisriel discovered not only the ways of military life and the ways of life back home during the war, but a love that poured off of the pages.

Delmarva History Series: An Unbeatable Dutchman Lecture
Thursday, September 20, 7 p.m., Nabb Center Gallery
An Unbeatable Dutchman tells the story of 17th century immigrant to Delmarva, Pieter Alricks, who had a 30-year career in the government, serving under both the Dutch and the English. Author Kay Hutchinson speaks about Alricks and his uncle Jacob, who was Commissary General of the Dutch colony on the South (or Delaware) River.

Beyond DNA Lecture Reading
Wednesday, October 10, 7 p.m., Nabb Center Gallery
Selena Post reads from her book *Beyond DNA: Inheriting Spiritual Strength from the Women in Your Family Tree*. Post shares her process in discovering her heritage and the benefits of finding ones ancestors and learning from them.

Haunted Eastern Shore Bus Tour with Mindie Burgoyne
Sunday, October 28, 1-5 p.m., Various sites
Tour the Lower Eastern Shore and uncover the truth about legendary haunted historical sites. Travel through Princess Anne, Crisfield, Marion and more while hearing historical accounts and catching a closer look. The cost is $35 dollars per person. The bus will depart from the Nabb Center parking lot. Space is limited. Call 410-543-6312 for reservations.

Delaware and the Civil War Part 2 with Stan Williams Lecture
Thursday, November 15, 7 p.m. Nabb Center Gallery
Both philosophically and geographically, Delaware was caught in the full fury of America's unfolding historic drama between 1861-1865. The war tore apart friends, townships and even families within the first state. Delaware saw its share of Confederate spies, rebel raiders and Southern sympathizers, along with incredible acts of courage, both on the battlefield and at sea.